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Getting our message across: Strategic reflections on modernizing statistical communication

New trends in communication – branding and content marketing

Note by German Federal Statistical Office (Destatis)

Summary

This document presents elements of communication strategy adopted by Destatis. The strategy aims to convey more effectively the reliability of the statistical office based on quality data and transparent methods, and thus strengthen the office's reputation and increase the appreciation of official statistics. The strategy uses marketing techniques, branding, tailoring statistical products to users' needs, public relations, better transparency and measures to increase statistical literacy.

The document is presented to the Conference of European Statisticians' seminar on "Getting our message across: Strategic reflections on modernizing statistical communication", Session 1: "Strategic communications" for discussion.

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I. Introduction

1. In the era of data overload, authoritative facts and the ways in which they are communicated are becoming increasingly important. The authority and credibility of statistics has become a main issue. Official statistics need to stand out from others as being a guaranty for quality statistics.

2. Statistical organizations should develop promotion strategies to advertise their strengths, ensuring that they connect effectively and efficiently with their users and build their reputation as providers of trustworthy data. In this document, authors will make the case for statistical offices to make more use of marketing tools to get the brand official statistics known as a trustworthy source of information, to convey the message about the value[1] (quality) of their data and bring statistics to life by using different communication channels, tools and techniques.

II. Branding

3. To deal with the increasing amounts of data, people need to be more aware about the quality and reliability of data. Quality should become the decisive factor when choosing a data source. That is where official statistics can stand out of the piles and piles of other data. National statistical offices (NSOs) produce official statistics and strive for accuracy, reliability and uncompromised objectivity using the best methods, as enshrined in the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics[2]. NSOs should therefore work towards strengthening the brand of "official statistics" vis-à-vis other data producers by emphasizing the quality aspects of their data as the main competitive advantage.

4. It is thus necessary to explain clearly on the institution's website the quality framework/guidelines and all the measures that are put in place to ensure the quality of the data. NSOs should make a clear and concise quality statement that summarizes how they implement the Fundamental Principles of Official Statistics, thus guaranteeing the reliability, objectivity and high quality of the products they produce, in distinction from other data providers that do not apply the Fundamental Principles rigorously.

5. This alone does not convince users of the quality of our data. In Europe, we have put in place the European Statistical System statistics code of practice[3] as a guarantor for quality and have recently adopted a quality declaration[4]. These are important cornerstones but we have to transmit these values to our users. This is branding: we have to raise the awareness of users of the quality of our data and thus improve the trust in our institutions.

III. Communication strategy

6. Statistical offices have to first internally position themselves on how they would like to be perceived by the users (NSO's key message: you can trust our institution and our data). Secondly, develop a communication strategy stating the goals to reach. This provides the basic frame for action. Destatis has developed a communication strategy[5] based on 5 pillars: strengthen the brand of "official statistics", improve access, meet the needs of target

[1] https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/stats/documents/ece/ces/2017/CES_4_E_Value_of_official_stats.pdf

[2] https://unstats.un.org/unsd/dnss/gp/FP-New-E.pdf

[3] http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-manuals-and-guidelines/-/KS-32-11-955

[4] http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/64157/4392716/quality-declaration-ESS.pdf

[5] https://www.destatis.de/EN/AboutUs/CommunicationStrategy/CommunicationStrategy.html

groups, expand the dialogue and improve understandability. Third, choose a marketing approach.

7. Which set of marketing and communication methods could we use to distinguish the NSOs and official statistics from competitors and create a lasting impression in the minds of our users?

IV. Getting the brand known: "Open copyright"

8. A first step to start to build the brand is to use "Open copyright" as an incentive for users to refer to official statistics and make sure that the source is always present and correctly quoted.

9. It is important to provide products displaying a clear copyright that can be used by different media (ready to use graphs, infographics and interactive maps). The trademark "official statistics" should be perceived as a seal of quality for the users increasing the trust in statistical offices institutions and ultimately in their data.

10. In Germany, the trademark of the NSO refers to "Statistisches Bundesamt (Destatis)", to make clear that we are talking about a sole institution. In this effort to make their trademark known, Destatis has started to clearly display it in graphs and ready made tables that can be used by newspapers, magazines and other sources. These ready to use interactive graphs can be used in different internet platforms making the official statistics brand known.

V. Building the trust in "official statistics"

11. How to make sure that the brand "official statistics" is associated to high quality statistics and NSOs are considered as trustworthy sources?

12. In this section, we will list some tools that can be used by NSOs to increase trust of users by improving user engagement and user focus. We will illustrate this with examples based in our experience at Destatis.

A. Data with personal relevance for users

13. Statistics frequently use concepts that are meaningless to the majority of the persons; these are complex and abstract artifacts that need to be translated to be meaningful to people. An everyday example is the inflation rate – it needs to be disaggregated to be understandable. Users need to find and identify themselves in the data NSOs produce: an average alone is most of the time meaningless. It is necessary to provide the context and to communicate the range so that persons find themselves reflected in the numbers. This increases the trust of the users in the data. Statistical offices need to develop the ability to put themselves in the place of the users.

B. Transparency

14. Another measure to ensure trust is to be transparent about the methods that the NSOs use, and clearly state divergences in numbers. A recent example of transparent

reporting in Destatis was the way we published the differences in the different calculations behind the number of citizens with double citizenship[6].

15. Transparently explaining the strengths and weaknesses of particular statistics is an essential part of the communication to users as is providing impartial interpretation of what underlies trends and comparisons.

C. Dialogue with users

16. Statistical offices can also increase trust by engaging in constant dialogue with their users, which can take many forms such as showing that their feedback on issues is taken seriously. This builds up the trust and enhances the reputation of the institution and ultimately of the data produced. Effective user engagement should be a continuous dialogue, not just a series of one off consultations.

17. NSOs need to make an extensive analysis of what is being said about them in social media and react when needed. It is necessary to respond to what is being said in the different platforms, show that NSOs are listening and handle important issues in the platforms where the users are active, i.e., by going to their meeting place (e.g. Twitter, Instagram). Talk with the network and spread the statistical office brand. Actively participate. It is not a question of how many there are, but who they are and of what the NSO has to communicate.

18. In Destatis we received positive feedback via Twitter after we changed our press releases to clearly state the methods and data sources used as a reaction to previous criticism by journalists. This contributes to establishing our brand as an institution that people can trust thus also bringing them to trust our data.

D. Public relations: influencers

19. NSOs can also resort to advertise their message by making use of influencers: identifying individuals that have influence over potential users, and orient marketing activities around these influencers. NSOs can resort to having their messages repeated by "influencers" who have a good reputation that gives weight to their message and expands its publicity. For example, in its 2015 annual report, Destatis included an interview with a State Minister.

VI. Content marketing

20. The majority of the public, however, will never directly consult a statistical office or look to it as a source of news. For most citizens, it was the news media itself – newspapers, radio and television – that provided their exposure to official statistics. As the "gatekeepers" to the public, the news media gave statistical offices a powerful tool to fulfill a critical part of their mandate. But many statistical offices have already gone a step further pursuing a new goal – starting to act as news agents themselves by publishing news via social media channels (e.g. Twitter) or by developing products that can be easily used by the media (e.g. interactive infographics, videos). Two examples in this domain are the case of statistical offices of the Netherlands[7] and Mexico[8] both producing videos for the media.

[6] https://www.destatis.de/EN/FactsFigures/InFocus/Population/DualCitizenshipHolders.html

[7] https://www.cbs.nl/en-gb

[8] http://en.www.inegi.org.mx/

21. Still the extent to which statistical offices can collaborate with the news media, and communicate effectively through them, has an enormous impact on how well they can inform the general population. A good example is the relation that the UK statistical office (ONS) has developed with BBC. The BBC has recently commissioned an independent study "Making sense of statistics"[9] to analyze how statistics are being reported. It concludes by highlighting the importance of data journalists for successful communication. Destatis has for instance held recently a special workshop for data journalists.

22. Destatis has also started to take its first steps in another front in an effort to establish its brand through content marketing. This is a new trend in leading German enterprises like Daimler and Telekom. At Destatis this is done by using software to research which topics are being discussed in different websites, which ones have a high relevance and in which statistics are not well represented, and analyze how to bring statistics into these sites. It can be through making new statistical contents available or just by making the website owner aware of already existing products, highlighting the advantages of having this statistical information. When this happens, the marketing campaign is successful.

23. This is associated with a change in the institutional culture of Destatis – it is no longer enough to produce statistical products that answer user needs and wait for them to come and get it from our website. We need to place these products in the relevant platforms and formats to increase the impact.

VII. Statistical literacy

24. The promotion of statistical literacy and culture as a basic pillar of statistics use is highly important and constitutes a major task of the statistical institutions. There is a need for enhancing statistical literacy among all segments of current and potential users.

25. Statistical culture, promoted by the national statistical institutions among the large public should lead to decreased misunderstandings and increased capability of understanding the significance and meaning of statistical information, of analyzing and using the data provided to the public.

26. Destatis has invested in visualization tools and e-learning modules aiming to improve statistical literacy. One of the most useful is the module that helps to avoid the common pitfalls of statistical interpretation[10]. Whilst enhancing the statistical literacy of users, these measures also contribute to increasing trust.

27. Finally and to make use of the Agenda 2030[11] motto, NSOs should leave no one behind and effectively reach all users. In Destatis this is also done by having contents in sign language. This increases our understandability, increases trust and establishes our brand.

VIII. Conclusions

28. The main message for statistical offices is that their reliability based on quality data and transparent methods should be conveyed through an effective communication strategy thus building a specific brand. To this end, NSOs can resort to marketing techniques, production of statistical products tailored to users' needs, measures to increase statistical

[9] http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/bbctrust/assets/files/pdf/our_work/stats_impartiality/report.pdf

[10] https://www.destatis.de/DE/PresseService/StatistikCampus/ELearning/Module/Modul14/MittelwerteDurchschnitte.html

[11] https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld

literacy and being transparent. This is of strategic importance for increasing the appreciation of official statistics and leading users to perceive the statistical offices as trustworthy.

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Getting our message across: Strategic reflections on modernizing statistical communication

The role of official statistics in an evolving communication society

Note by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

Summary

With the rapid evolution of the digital world in recent years, the way of communicating and retrieving information has changed dramatically in our society. People are increasingly relying on social media as their main source of information. If National Statistical Offices are to remain relevant, they must ensure that official statistics are present in social media, providing the factual statistical information people need to make informed decisions.

With this objective in mind, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development organized a conference in October 2017 on the role of official statistics in an evolving communication society. This document provides an overview of the key takeaways of the conference, notably as regards to knowing and adapting to new audiences, responding to alternative evidence, fostering a strong social media community, and humanising data by telling stories that speak to people.

The document is presented to the Conference of European Statisticians' seminar on "Getting our message across: Strategic reflections on modernizing statistical communication" for discussion.

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I. Introduction

1. Official statistics provide people with the reliable data they need to form opinions; however, the way in which young people are accessing information today is changing at a rapid pace, with social media being one of the main sources of news. It is therefore imperative to ensure that the information being shared on social media is factual, accurate and unbiased. Official statistics are essential in making this happen. With this in mind, under the auspices of the OECD Committee on Statistics and Statistical Policy, on 5-6 October 2017, the OECD hosted a conference on the role of official statistics in an evolving communications society. The purpose of the conference was to address the challenges that National Statistical Offices (NSOs) and International Organisations with official statistical activities (IOSs) face in remaining relevant in a rapidly-evolving world and help them develop new communication strategies[1]. This document outlines the key takeaways of the conference.

II. How opinions are formed in the 21st century

2. People and tools have always been considered as separate entities. However, the digital revolution is closing the gap between man and machine. Indeed, the world is entering an era of unprecedented technological intimacy.

3. Specifically, four hidden forces can be identified as being key in shaping people's opinions. First, the world is now abundant with data, creating an evolution in our relationship with information. While people were once taught to think in limited and fixed end-terms, the world is now unlimited and open ended in information, which impacts people's cognitive abilities and attention spans. To cope with this rapid change in information sharing, people should cultivate a mind-set of "information zen", understanding that it is no longer possible to know everything. Second, digitalisation has created a new reality and culture where personalised content has affected objectivity. With everyone able to publish online, opinions are morphing into beliefs. Third, the rise of newfound 'digital DNA' is seeing people embed their values into technological code. Modern technology is now the manifestation of people's belief systems. Lastly, the information economy itself is a hidden force. The post-truth world is run like a business, where it is facilitating shifts of behaviour amongst people.

4. How can NSOs and IOSs navigate this post-truth environment? Having people from outside of the statistical community help statisticians think about these issues is critical. Also, good statistical indicators and good policies is only the beginning of influencing people's opinions. Indeed, people are not always rational economic and social beings. Therefore, organisations need to engage in a different kind of discussion in their respective communities in order to combat this new era of disinformation. OECD has launched the New Approaches to Economic Challenges (NAEC), which looks into these issues by bringing other fields together (such as sociology, history, etc.).

III. Who is our audience and how are they getting their facts?

5. NSOs and IOSs are trying to reach very diverse audiences today and often find themselves torn on how to best disseminate information to these audiences. Organisations

[1] The first day of the conference gathered Heads of NSOs and IOSs, sociologists, communications experts, journalists, academics, policy experts and students while the second day was limited to Director-Generals, Chief Statisticians and Communication Officers of NSOs and IOSs.

should therefore look at the supply and demand of information. Specifically, NSOs and IOSs should look at the demand for facts, and not just supply them blindly. For example, while social media is the main source of news for 18-24 year olds, TV news is still the main source of news across all age groups amongst OECD countries. NSOs and IOSs must therefore disseminate their data accordingly.

6. NSOs and IOSs have become comfortable with disseminating information to an already-informed public. However, organisations should remain aware that the general public is not necessarily informed at the same level. NSOs and IOSs need to make 'data cool', by making it relatable.

7. Organisations should also experiment, learn and adapt to the conversations that are already happening online, and join them accordingly. This will allow NSOs and IOSs to appeal as much to the heart as to the mind, as the emotional story is far more compelling. In order to reach out to a larger audience, organisations should work with partners to amplify their message and strengthen their branding strategy as brands inspire trust. Finally, organisations should not be afraid to hire new skills and think outside of the box.

IV. Differentiating between fact and fiction: How is "alternative evidence" created and propagated?

8. 'Alternative evidence' is an unfortunate reality that is plaguing social media and news outlets more generally. There is an inherent danger in misinforming the public which places greater responsibility on NSOs and IOSs to protect their brand as the trusted source of facts. *Google News Lab* and the *International Fact-Checking Network* for example have succeeded in debunking fake news stories and have developed partnerships with NSOs to help verify information and fight against the creation of alternative evidence.

9. However, debunking incorrect stories is a complex task, since corrections of false news may reach different people than the original news. Also, corrections of rumours can backfire, so organisations should position themselves as the trusted source of information, and ensure that fact-checkers have the facts they need to make the necessary corrections. Partnerships are therefore pivotal in combatting fake news and ensuring the correct information reaches the right audiences. In addition to partnerships, organisations should make it easy for people to link to the facts directly on their official websites and can amplify their message through videos and other visual tools that have proven to be impactful in debunking alternative evidence.

V. Building stronger social media communities and reaching out to those who matter

10. Social media is not only about communicating outwards but also about listening. Developing strong social media communities helps to further expand NSOs' and IOSs' reach. This is done through listening, adding value, engaging and sharing insights. It is also important to use the most popular social media platforms (such as Facebook, Twitter, etc.) effectively. Indeed, different social media channels fit different audiences and different purposes. Organisations need to adapt their content to suit each platform.

11. The success of social media today is that it empowers users and communities that would otherwise be impossible to connect with. As such, NSOs and IOSs must leverage this incredible opportunity. Through targeted outreach on various channels, and by tracking the performance of that outreach with metrics, organisations have the possibility to bolster their strategies and reach a wider audience.

12. Social media strategies need to be considered as part of an organisation's wider communications plan in order to amplify the impact of the data being disseminated, and NSOs and IOSs should share experiences amongst each other.

VI. Humanising data to tell stories that speak to social media users

13. The purpose of 'humanising data' is to tell a relatable and digestible story that speaks to people and audiences. Also, if organisations can prompt an emotional response from their audience, the message is more likely to be retained. As people enjoy finding out about others and themselves, using real-life examples and exposing the human element in a dataset tends to get people's attention as it allows them to see where they fit in the bigger picture. In fact, statistics being presented do not necessarily need to be exciting; if they talk to the people, they will be interesting.

14. Organisations need to provide succinct quality content that people can easily grasp and can understand after a single reading. In order to succeed in this goal, NSOs and IOSs should strive to provide a narrative by training writers to write in plain language. It is also important to be "bilingual", speaking both the technical and non-technical language so as not to compromise on the rigour of the data being communicated.

VII. What social media strategies for National Statistical Offices and International Organisations with official statistical activities: Partnering for success

15. Partnerships are key to strengthening NSOs and IOSs' communication strategies. To this end, while the media community may be, at times, misinforming the public, they should continue to be an important partner for NSOs and IOSs.

16. There is also a need to further develop literacy and understanding of statistics. NSOs and IOSs may want to target schools (including those who write school curriculums), teachers, parents and families, sports groups and the gaming industry to attain this objective.

17. Before starting to develop partnerships, NSOs and IOSs should follow several steps in planning these, including: clarifying the issue, identifying the audience, exploring partnership and format opportunities, deciding on the appropriate channels and tone of the messages. Indeed, the more contextual outreach efforts are, the likelier they are to create strong and lasting partnerships. Lastly, while NSOs and IOSs may want to focus only on partnering with one or two organisations, it may be beneficial to create an exhaustive list of potential partners and then determine what can be done with each partner.

VIII. What social media strategies for NSOs and IOSs: Building communities and delivering the right information

18. Although the need to build strong social media communities is recognised, situations differ between countries, with small statistical offices having fewer resources to invest in this task. There is also a need to establish a better understanding in NSOs and IOSs between the statisticians/experts and the communication experts.

19. In terms of strategy, re-shaping the story so people can learn to trust NSOs and IOSs as the main source of official data and news is critical. Partnering with journalists and

education ministries is a good strategy to help attain this goal. Organisations must also be willing to take a risk, engaging fully with the social media community by interacting with their followers, and creating a unique personality online, in order to stand out.

20. Building trust within communities is a challenge; organisations need to be creative in how they put out information to help build a positive reputation. In order to identify what communities NSOs and IOSs are failing to reach, they could start by identifying who they are trying to reach, and where and how these target audiences are consuming information.

IX. Key takeaways

21. Over the course of the Conference, it became clear that bringing the statistical community together with the non-statistical community to discuss communication in a social media driven world was a useful exercise. NSOs and IOSs are in a powerful position to communicate as they are disseminating high quality and relevant statistical data that can have an impact on society. Nonetheless, NSOs and IOSs need to convey complex issues in simple ways online while remaining rigorous and ensuring that data are not over-simplified. Social media is only one part of organisations' overall communications strategies, audiences not on social media should not be neglected, and a good balance needs to be found. There is no single approach, and if NSOs and IOSs are to resonate with their audiences they need to know who these are.

22. Ultimately, NSOs and IOSs should devote more time to discovering what it takes to be successful online, to change their social media culture, and to become more outspoken while keeping their principles in mind.

X. Future goals

23. Data is growing at a rapid pace worldwide today. The speed, volume and reach of today's digital information flows are creating conditions for misinformation, fake news and false 'evidence' to thrive. OECD intends to continue to tackle this problem through its NAEC initiative, specifically through the organisation of future workshops that will seek to underpin the functioning of social media and assess social media's positive and negative influence on the judgements, decisions and actions of citizens, companies, policymakers, and civil society. Beyond this, OECD is developing new statistics and new tools to better understand how economies work today. Information sharing and the exchange of best practices among NSOs and IOSs is critical to ensuring that our communications do not become obsolete in a rapidly evolving world of media.

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Getting our message across: Strategic reflections on modernizing statistical communication

Towards a new communication strategy for Statistics Belgium

Note by Statistics Belgium

Summary

This document presents a new, user-oriented communication strategy adopted by Statistics Belgium, and the principles followed in its various components, such as branding, communication, value creation, cooperation and promotion of statistical literacy. The strategy aims to respond to the current rapid technological and societal changes and to maintain the relevance of Statistics Belgium in this challenging era. In the final section, the paper gives examples of the first projects implemented under the new strategy.

The document is presented to the Conference of European Statisticians' seminar on "Getting our message across: Strategic reflections on modernizing statistical communication", Session 1: "Strategic communications" for discussion.

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I. New challenges to strategic communication

1. Over the last twenty years, a storm has shattered the way the world communicates and this storm is still raging. Traditional media are faltering, social media have conquered a position yet to be defined, and the distinction between knowledge and emotion, factual information and its perception has become unclear. In her keynote speech at the OECD conference in Paris last year, Rahaf Harfoush formulated the consequences of this evolution polemically: "We are creating a culture where the expectation of personalized content is making objectivity redundant."

2. This poses major challenges to everybody concerned with what has been defined as "evidence-based policy", and hence to official statisticians in particular. Should they continue to be the gatekeepers of unshakeable truth or will they have to adapt to the new situation, e.g. by integrating emotional aspects in their storytelling?

3. Harfoush gave an impetus to the discussion by asking five questions:

(a) Are we preaching to the converted?

(b) What tangible goal do we want to see from statistics?

(c) What is our information philosophy?

(d) Are we evolving our networks?

(e) Are we taking advantage of digital culture?

4. At Statistics Belgium, we had already started a discussion on a new communication strategy that would be more user-oriented and take into account technological and societal changes. However, we are well aware that the world could change more rapidly than our strategic discussions would advance. Harfoush's questions could be the background on which to assess if we are still on the right track.

5. On the other hand, resources for ambitious communication projects are rather scarce at Statistics Belgium. This forces us to make very strict and practical choices and focus on essential changes that can be implemented at low cost.

6. In the following, we therefore do not aim at finding a way to make the (statistical) world better, but on a hands-on strategy to stay relevant in a rapidly changing, challenging era.

II. A new communication strategy for Statistics Belgium

A. Creating a brand

7. Creating a brand is the starting point of any good communication. Branding, image building and visibility are essential to a successful communication process. But they are also overly sophisticated words that have to be put into practice.

- Choose a short and powerful name and clearly state what you do. Since January 2018, Statbel has opted for "Statbel, the Belgian statistical office". It worked: newspapers, radio and TV gladly started to use it;
- Be visible and make sure to follow up properly on your logo, name and house style. Tell your partners and stakeholders what you expect from them. Repeat the same message. Keep repeating;

- Link your brand to a number of characteristics you find important, like quality. Use the power of good copywriting to describe yourself in a clear way. Choose for example three key words, the last being the most important. Use your words sparingly but effectively. Make sure that your brand is perceived as a trusted source.

B. External communication

8. External communication seems to be an obvious step. However, reality shows that it is not so obvious. We keep using the word "dissemination" but external communication covers a much wider field. It often starts where dissemination stops. National statistical institutes need a specific organisational structure for external communication. Furthermore, external communication is a mission for your whole organisation while "dissemination" could be a task of one specific team.

- Use all your employees as ambassadors for your external communication. Do not only bring out your figures, but show every day what else you do to produce these figures. Make sure that all the stories of your organisation are told. Show your social impact.

9. The term "dissemination" is a synonym of "spitting out" your data, in only one direction. External communication is at its best a two-way (or multi-sided, network-like) process.

- Communicate your figures and what your organisation does in a clear way;
- Choose the right platforms and listen carefully to what all your target groups have to say;
- Make sure they feel involved, listen to their questions, make sure they actively share your communication and want to be linked to you.

C. Internal communication

10. All good external communication should start with good internal communication. If your employees are not aware of what and how you communicate externally, you cannot expect that they will properly communicate internally or that they will want to be an external ambassador for you.

11. Everyone in a national statistical institute is one way or another an expert in her/his field.

- Use internal expertise, be open to dialogue, start discussions.
- Make sure discussions are properly followed up and be clear about your objectives and expectations.
- Be aware that good internal communication is the best way to prevent crises. Crisis communication can be perfectly prepared, as long as everyone is informed that there is a possible problem. Therefore, be proactive in all your internal communication and expect the same from your employees. This way, you avoid having to find out what is going on when a crisis is in full swing. Never think "It does not happen to me". Be alert and critical, and be aware of your major social impact.

D. Be and stay relevant

- Do not ignore social debates. Be a part of it. Show your value. Show that you are not in an ivory tower.
- You will never be able to be the fastest. Rather take the lead with innovation, transparency and accessibility.
- Show your relevance: share good practices and research that made use of your figures.
- Distribute your figures. You can no longer count on your authority, on people to see it or media to take over. Try to reach your audience directly.
- Develop a network of people and organizations willing to share your messages. Find other ways to get your messages to a wide audience.
- Digital is the new Gutenberg. Explore any innovative channel.
- Use flow and tension in your communication. Tell a story, with beginning, middle and end.
- Ensure that you reach the younger generation: many of them do not use classic news channels anymore.
- Understand the psychology of your relationship with the audience: people are emotional beings and they will look at you with feelings. Find out what these feelings are, how your audience relates to your brand and why they do so and what they would like to see.
- Seek inspiration in general market research in order to know what the main points of interest of your audience are (in Belgium probably money, family or health). Find ways to respond to these interests.
- Collect as many insights and opinions as possible, and adjust your communication accordingly. Be a chameleon. Use what exists, follow insights and reports closely, make sure you apply them actively, avoid being the man of yesterday, do not wait and see.

E. Renew and experiment

- Make time and space for innovation and experiments. Provide a playground for your employees, let them tinker and try in a controlled way. Free time and space act like a relief and can lead to concrete results more quickly than you expected.
- Make sure to pick out the strong elements from marketing, PR and storytelling, and to examine what they can mean for your organisation. Do not be afraid of these more commercial terms, and make sure, in particular, that you can translate them in an authentic way into your own communication and whole organisation.
- Brainstorm, question yourself, make visions in the very long term. Reflect on questions such as "What do we want to be as an NSI? How do we want to and how can we profile ourselves, and to whom? Which people have a role to play in this regard? Which stories can we and do we want to tell, and how?"
- Make space to try something new sometimes, in a controlled way. Make sure to keep an image of an important, qualitative and reliable source, but also of an office open to innovation.

F. Simplify

12. It is certainly important that official statistics be communicated in the right context with the right words. The terms you use, the sets of figures you make only exist for as long as your regular users know what it is all about.

13. However, statistical institutes also have a duty to use a clear language for many other target groups, which is much more difficult. Of course, we all find a nice infographic when it comes to an international beer day. But what about more serious topics? Will we switch back to the standard heavy terms and way of communicating? Here too, more than ever, NSIs need to look for a way to reach different audiences, and to ensure that they see and understand your figures.

- Do not rely solely on the media to communicate figures properly. They are a channel for communication, but to simplify more your own messages gives you the opportunity to better communicate directly with your audience;
- Do not produce your figures for academics and experts only. Look for ways to appeal to other target groups. And take a critical look at them;
- For example, set up a focus group and ask them: if you make an infographic, do they understand what it says? Is it attractive for them? How would they want you to communicate? How can you ensure that you reach not only the interested intellectual elite, but also all other layers of society? When you develop a new communication product, do you test it with the audience you want? Or do you only assume that this product is necessary?

G. Value

- Use the expertise you have in-house and be proud of it;
- Make sure to give your organisation and your figures a face, by letting a number of experts speak and by presenting them in pictures;
- But: choose experts who feel comfortable enough to do it, and make sure that it remains manageable. Let the expert know what you expect from him, how he can properly convey certain things. Do not wait for the first TV interview to train him;
- Make your own press videos, write articles as if they were for the newspaper, make analyses in which the expert is given the floor.

H. Cooperate

- Partner for success.
- Look for partnerships, and get off the beaten paths. You do not have to find or do everything by yourself.
- Collaborate, broaden your projects, and be open to external influences within a clear framework.
- Look for partners who can strengthen your message. Negotiate your partnership and ensure that everyone emerges stronger.
- Evaluate afterwards and adjust where necessary. Do not be afraid and look more actively for national and international opportunities for collaboration.

I. Promote statistical literacy

14. Statistical literacy has been widely discussed as a lever to enhance popular involvement in and support for official statistics. However, more agreements and objectives could be reached internationally in this regard.

- Do not see statistical literacy as a goal in itself but as a hat under which you can take many actions.
- Do not start on your own. Go outside, look what happens, inquire about the needs of teachers, for example.
- Make sure that you can respond with innovative products.
- Particularly interesting partnerships are just around the corner: with influencers who have many followers or with organisations that are already very active in the field and bring a lot of experience. Collaborate within the framework of your own objectives. Inspire and strengthen one another with one common general interest: a better understanding of official statistics.

III. First realisations and projects under the new strategy

15. Statistics Belgium has already developed or is developing some communication projects that fit into this new strategy:

(a) A news-centred and user-friendly website:

- The project of the new website was developed from the start in collaboration with an external consultant. This company organised panel discussions with several of our stakeholders and users, which resulted in a completely new web architecture. Usability is paramount in our new, news-centred website. Every update is released with a news message, the size of which is a function of the importance of the topic;
- Figures can be easily found on the same page as the news release, in different file types (open data, interactive database or "simple" Excel file) alongside the metadata files explaining the definitions;
- The new website turned out to be a real game changer for Statistics Belgium. Statisticians were challenged to create new types of texts and to focus on the most important aspect in their releases. A dedicated section of the website was given to the teams that are collecting the data, in order to reach their audiences directly, and to offer direct links to FAQs and online surveys. Overall, the information that Statistics Belgium provides is now clear and easy to access.

(b) At the beginning of 2018, Statistics Belgium launched its own brand: Statbel – Belgium in figures. This name and new logo were created to emphasize our professional independence. At the same time, the logo and name help us to gain more visibility for our organisation and our figures. All documents were adapted and a sentence 'the Belgian statistical office' was added in press releases. This had a great impact. Before, our figures were quoted under several names (or 'brands'), but since January, journalists consistently use "Statbel", in most of the cases with "the Belgian statistical office".

(c) The domain of statistical literacy is being intensively researched during 2018. A working group has been launched within Statistics Belgium and is developing several projects at the same time. On one hand, a new and experimental tool for children between 8 and 12 year (primary schools) will be developed. On the other hand, possibilities and

existing projects within secondary education (12-18 year) will be researched. This working group will give advice to Statistics Belgium on opportunities in the field of statistical literacy, not only to start projects on itself, but also to use existing networks, projects and possible partnerships.

(d) More interactive tools and visualisations. In June 2018, we will present an interactive, user-friendly tool to show figures about all municipalities in Belgium. Users will be able to compare easily municipalities or cities with one another, or to compare with regions or the entire country.

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Item 7 of the provisional agenda
Getting our message across: Strategic reflections on modernizing statistical communication

Building a good reputation and avoiding pitfalls: Communications strategies for official statistics in the United States

Note by the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics

Summary

While the United States has a decentralized statistical system, with many agencies mostly scattered throughout cabinet-level departments, there are both individual and joint efforts across the system to communicate the quality of US statistics to a wide range of stakeholders, including data providers and data users.

US statistical agencies are taking a number of actions to get the word out and build (and build upon) a good reputation and increase trust, and actions that can be taken to address issues as they arise.

The US Bureau of Labor Statistics recently adopted a crisis communications strategy to ensure that the necessary tools are in place to address unforeseen issues. With social media and the immediacy of the news cycle today, statistical agencies need to be prepared to respond to high-profile issues quickly.

The document is presented to the Conference of European Statisticians' seminar on "Getting our message across: Strategic reflections on modernizing statistical communication", Session 2: "Communication crises - issue and reputation management" for discussion.

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I. Introduction

1. While the United States has a decentralized statistical system, with many agencies mostly scattered throughout cabinet-level departments, there are both individual and joint efforts across the system to communicate the quality of US statistics to a wide range of stakeholders, including data providers and data users. From the first Census in 1790 to the establishment of federal statistical agencies in the 19th and 20th centuries, then to the incorporation of big data and artificial intelligence in the 21st century, the importance of delivering the right message about the care taken to produce high quality data has always been strong, and is perhaps at its strongest today. Trust in many institutions is low, frequent cybersecurity incidents make individuals and businesses wary about providing information, and competing sources of information – sometimes of questionable quality – are just some of the challenges facing statistical agencies. To address these challenges, the US Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) and its sister statistical agencies have introduced new communications channels to get the message out to wider and more diverse audiences and are exploring radical changes to the way that information is disseminated in the future.

2. At the same time, statistical agencies have to avoid pitfalls that can harm their reputation, and have to be prepared to address issues that may arise. The BLS recently adopted a crisis communications strategy to ensure that the necessary tools are in place to address unforeseen issues. In the past, an attack on the quality of statistics might appear in the newspaper. After several drafts and rounds of review, the statistical agency head might author a letter to the editor that was most likely too late and too watered down. With social media and the immediacy of the news cycle today, statistical agencies need to be prepared to respond to high-profile issues quickly. The BLS crisis communications strategy considers issues such as the early or late release of data, incidents involving staff, and questions about the quality of data coming from prominent individuals. As the situation warrants, an already identified crisis team would approve a standby statement that can quickly be released via Twitter. Such a statement might confirm an issue (such as a delayed release) or might simply acknowledge that something occurred (such as a criticism). Such statements might be followed up with more detail, should events warrant. The goal is not to have to start from scratch each time an issue arises.

3. This document consists of two broad sections: actions that US statistical agencies are taking to get the word out and build (and build upon) a good reputation and increase trust, and actions that can be taken to address issues as they arise. In the case of proactive actions to build a reputation, we will look at new approaches to data dissemination designed to reach a wide range of data users. In the case of largely reactive actions that address issues and help to avoid pitfalls, we will consider a few scenarios that might affect a statistical agency, discuss whether any response is warranted, and examine various options for response. To conclude, we will peer into the crystal ball to consider future reputation management efforts as well as future issues that may attempt to derail the statistical system.

II. Getting the word out

4. While the statistical system in the United States is decentralized, by law and by tradition the statistical agencies work together and follow the same guidelines. In 2017, the Chief Statistician of the United States led an effort among the principle statistical agencies to develop a vision and roadmap for US statistics in the 21st century and beyond. This effort consisted of several focus areas, including quality guidelines for the use of alternative data sources and expanded opportunities for qualified researchers to access microdata from multiple statistical programs. As a result of this effort, the importance of improving

communication about the value of Federal statistics was also recognized. To this end, U.S statistical agencies are focusing on two related themes: how to provide statistical information in more user-friendly ways and how to reach a broader audience with our information.

5. By design, the release of statistical information can be somewhat dull. The goal is to provide impartial information and let others put the spin and interpretation on it. But that effort to avoid being partisan might get in the way of introducing innovation. Take for example the case of the monthly release of the US Consumer Price Index (CPI), a product of the Bureau of Labor Statistics that has been around for over 100 years. It appears that the agency has not made many changes to this news release for most of those 100 years. Sure, information is now available on the internet and available at lightning speed, but the release of 2018 looks an awful lot like the release of 1953. The typeface has changed and a chart has been added, but that is not a lot of progress for 65 years.

Figure 1

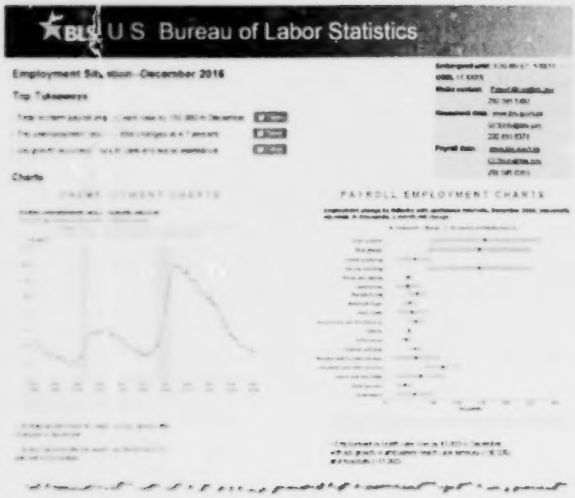
Comparative of monthly releases of the US Consumer Price Index (CPI)

1953 release

2018 release

6. There are efforts underway at BLS to redesign news releases. Known as "next generation" news releases, they are designed as a web product, complete with mouse-over definitions, direct links to data series, and "tweet-able" statements. In addition, the agency is experimenting with machine-learning techniques that would have the computer identify and write the key highlights from the data. In the spirit of remaining impartial and consistent, computers may do a better job of avoiding bias in the text than do human beings.

Figure 2
"Next generation" news releases



7. This is just one example of the efforts that US statistical agencies are making to reach a wider audience. Recently, the agencies also took stock of the various dissemination tools and formats being used, and are making efforts to share best practices and pitfalls. A couple of themes developed, such as vehicles to provide daily tidbits of information, often with a graphic focus, and efforts to tell stories using the data.

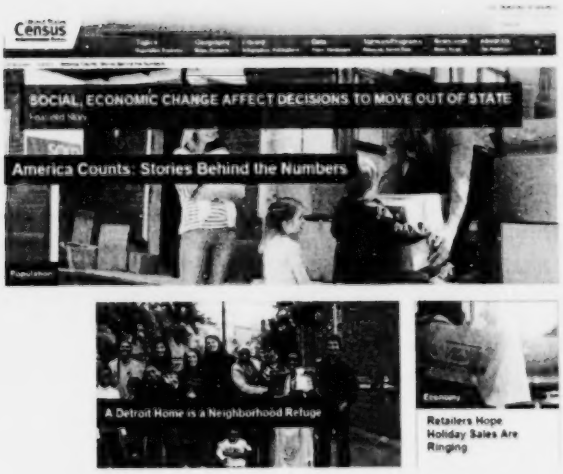
8. Under the heading of daily information, the Energy Information Administration issues *Today in Energy* and BLS issues *The Economics Daily*. These and similar products from other agencies provide a user-friendly graphic highlight of current data, typically released in the past few days. Under the heading of story-telling, the Census Bureau recently added a feature to its website called *America Counts: Stories Behind the Numbers*. These feature articles are designed for non-technical readers, and put context to the data. For example, early in 2018, one of the Stories Behind the Numbers looked at the number of Olympic athletes by state. Other agencies have similar products, such as *Beyond the Numbers* from BLS. And under the heading of cute names, the Bureau of Economic Analysis unleashed the *BEA-R Facts* – BEA Regional fact sheets, which are graphics heavy.

9. All of these products are available on the statistical agencies websites, which are the primary means of disseminating information. Millions of visitors each month access the multi-millions of data elements on these sites. In addition, the statistical agencies use a variety of social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and blogs. Videos are also becoming more prominent, focusing on the mission and output of the agencies, methodologies, data uses, and much more.

10. The agencies have also considered how to evaluate these various new products. Are they meeting customers' needs? Are they finding new audiences? Information from web site analytics, social media coverage and comments, likes and dislikes, and other metrics are used to make sure the time, energy, and funds going into these new products are well spent.

Figure 3
Examples of daily information and storytelling

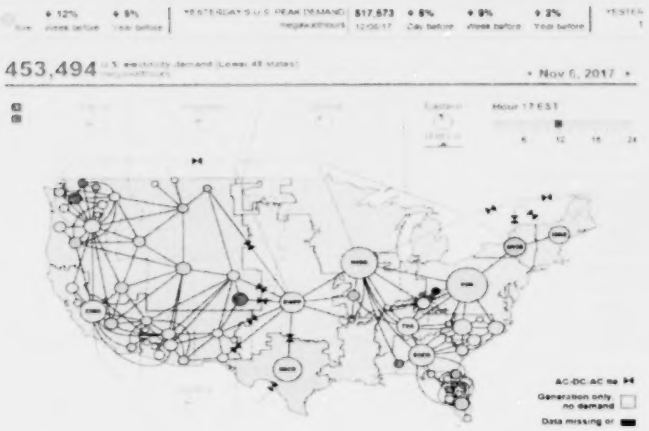
eia
TODAY IN ENERGY
TED: The Economics Daily
Employment increased in 318 of 346 largest counties for year ending June 2017


Census
SOCIAL, ECONOMIC CHANGE AFFECT DECISIONS TO MOVE OUT OF STATE
America Counts: Stories Behind the Numbers
A Detroit Home is a Neighborhood Refuge
Retailers Hope Holiday Sales Are Ringing

11. Having taken stock of what agencies are doing, the action is now turning to sharing information across statistical agencies. Plans are in the works to bring together the creative minds behind many of the new and different dissemination products to share their secrets, their successes, and their challenges with all statistical agencies.

12. What have we learned already? Statistical information doesn't have to be dull, and doesn't have to be simply a view of past history. Efforts are underway to provide nearly real-time information. The US Energy Information Administration's website now includes the US Electric System Operating Data tool, which provides hourly electricity operating data. This is not data from last year or last month or last week. This is data from the previous hour. By tapping into various administrative, social network, and video information, more and more of the statistics of the future may provide real time information.

Figure 4
US Electric System Operating Data tool



III. Reacting to challenges

13. However, all these innovative data products and dissemination platforms are of little use if the public doesn't trust the statistical information being provided. Emergencies or controversies can arise without warning and may be unavoidable. But a little planning may help to ease the communications efforts surrounding these events.

14. The US statistical agencies follow statistical policy directives established by the Office of Management and Budget, which provide a certain amount of independence from changes in policy and politics. This has served the US system well, and the public can rely on the data being accurate, timely, and objective year after year, regardless of political changes. But the statistical policy directives do not completely isolate the statistical agencies from potential crises, such as those resulting from an emergency or a controversy. The US Bureau of Labor Statistics has been proactive in developing a Crisis Communications Plan, the purpose of which is to be ready to address crises before they occur.

15. BLS defines a crisis as a significant event that prompts substantial, often sustained, news coverage and public scrutiny and has the potential to damage the organization's reputation and image. A crisis could be precipitated by an emergency or a controversy.

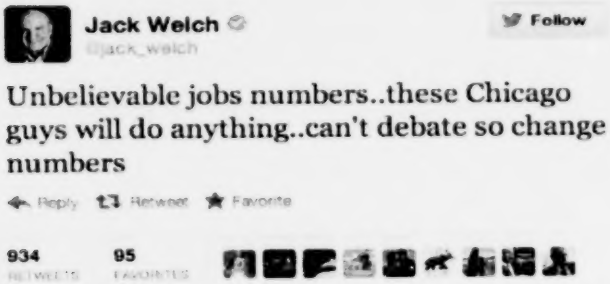
(a) An emergency is a fire, hurricane, crime or other event that presents a threat and typically involves a response from police, fire or emergency medical personnel. Such an event has the potential to disrupt the production and timely release of statistics.

(b) A controversy more directly involves the data the agency produces, such as a premature or delayed release of data or questions of data veracity from prominent figures. Such events have the potential to tarnish the reputation of the statistical agency.

16. There are typically standard operating procedures in place to handle emergencies, such as building evacuation procedures and back-up facilities to recover lost electronic data. But the fallout from a potential disruption of production is difficult to anticipate. For example, as Super Storm Sandy approached the east coast of the United States in late October 2012, it was anticipated that government agencies might be closed due to the weather emergency. BLS was contacted by several media outlets to inquire if the storm would disrupt the release of employment data on November 2nd, a few days before the presidential election. While contingency plans are in place for such events, such as having staff complete activities from home while teleworking, at that time no crisis communication plan was in place. Reporters were told that the agency would do everything it could to release data on time (which it did).

17. Controversies may be more difficult to address by standard procedures. This is especially true when the controversy is generated externally, such as when a prominent figure makes a comment questioning statistical data. For example, the former CEO of General Electric tweeted the following soon after BLS released employment data in October 2012, a month before the US presidential election. "Chicago guys" refers to supporters of President Obama, who was running for re-election.

Figure 5
Tweet by former CEO of General Electric



18. With no crisis communications plan in place, BLS had no prepared response. Media questions were answered by describing the process by which the data were produced, and by indicating that the process had not changed.

19. The BLS crisis communications plan we have in place now is designed to prepare the agency to address issues such as these when the need arises. The guiding principles for communicating about a crisis are to communicate facts as quickly as possible, update information regularly as circumstances change, and ensure the safety of the BLS community and the continued operation of essential services to stakeholders. Statements will be accurate and focus on what is known, without speculation. Communication will involve multiple media to reach as many people as possible with accurate, timely information. This is especially important in the first minutes, hours, and days of a crisis.

The goal is to be transparent, accountable, and accessible to all stakeholders, while also being mindful of legal and privacy concerns.

20. The plan identifies various roles, including a Crisis Communications Team that determines and enacts the communications tactics best suited to the crisis situation. This involves gathering and assessing facts, determining if a public response is needed, coordinating with other agencies as needed, responding honestly, and identifying any corrective actions. In developing the plan, BLS leadership worked through 6 possible scenarios, which covered a wide range of possible crises:

- Early release of embargoed data by BLS;
- Possible delay of news release (due to weather, building issues, data issues, IT failure, website down);
- Employee incident (high profile arrest, social media blunder);
- High profile building or security incident (unrelated to data release, such as flood, power outage, fire);
- Potential early release of embargoed data by public official;
- Prominent figure attacks the integrity of BLS and/or the need/accuracy of our data on a highly visible platform.

21. Under the plan, any potential crisis should be brought to the attention of the Crisis Communications Team as soon as possible. Events are then examined to determine if they warrant crisis communications activities. Based on the definition, if media are involved the situation is probably a crisis. If the agency reputation could be hurt, it is probably a crisis. An event may not meet these two criteria at the beginning but could grow into something bigger and become a crisis. All such situations are monitored closely by the Crisis Communications Team.

22. Situations that meet the definition of a crisis warrant action. To prepare to act, BLS identified a number of *standby statements* that could easily be applied to various situations and could be released within minutes of a crisis situation. For example:

- The Bureau of Labor Statistics is aware of reports of a potential early release of the **(date and name)** news release. More information is forthcoming.
- The Bureau of Labor Statistics is reviewing the **(event)** and more information is forthcoming;
- Because this is an **(emergency agency, e.g., fire)** matter, **(name/title)** of the **(emergency agency)** will be handling further inquiries about this case.
- We are aware of recent public reports questioning certain Bureau of Labor Statistics data. Everyone at BLS works diligently to ensure that the data from **(the BLS or name of program)** is the gold standard. Our data are reliable and our methods are transparent.

23. Depending upon circumstances, more statements may be issued as information becomes available. For example, if there were a building problem, the following statement might be issued:

- Because of an (event, e.g., electrical blackout, burst water main, weather emergency, discovery of a suspicious package, etc.) the Bureau of Labor Statistics' headquarters building was shut down at (time and date). We are working with (organizations) to resolve the problem. The unscheduled closure is not expected to affect the release of the (date and name) news release scheduled for release on (time and date).

24. Unfortunately, BLS has had occasion to use this Crisis Communications Plan, and it has proven effective. Incidents involving employees, as well as potential weather disruptions, have garnered media attention and required a reaction. In many cases, the statements developed are used with little change. They may be used to respond to media inquiries, either by telephone or email, or they may be issued as a public statement on the internet or via social media. In all cases, use of the Crisis Communications Plan is followed by a post-crisis evaluation. Here, all those involved address what was successful, what needed improvement, what changes are needed to the plan, and what would be done differently in the future.

IV. Looking forward

25. Today, information is available literally at your fingertips and instantaneously. The US statistical agencies are not always on the cutting edge of data dissemination techniques, but continue to make strides. The real-time data from the Energy Information Administration is a good example of how agencies might use administrative data sources, such as banking or retail scanners or traffic cameras, to produce the next generation of statistics. There are many issues to address when considering this next generation of statistics, not the least of which is data quality and reliability. Consideration must also be given to new technologies that will replace our cell phones and social media accounts in the coming decades. The US statistical agencies will continue to explore ways to make use of these new technologies while continuing to produce accurate, timely, and impartial information to help Americans make good decisions.

26. And crises will continue. They may be different crises, perhaps stemming from new technology. And while the media may change, there will always be a need to communicate. Development of the BLS Crisis Communications Plan provided the leadership of the agency an opportunity to think in advance about certain emergency situations and how they should be handled. No doubt the prepared statements will change over time, and experience from each event will help to improve those statements. Having those proactive conversations and preparing those statements in advance has served the agency well in times of crisis, and will be an essential element in the toolbox of the US statistical system as it continues to evolve to meet the needs of the 21st century and beyond.

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Getting our message across: Strategic reflections on modernizing statistical communication

Strategic communications - We need to get them young

Note by Statistics Norway

Summary

This document discusses the opportunities arising for national statistical offices in the "post-truth" era to modernize their communication strategies and reach young people and children as future decision makers and data suppliers. The paper presents Statistics Norway's strategies in this regard, which aim to ensure its adaptability to the ever-changing environment, and build a strong brand of the national statistical office.

The document is presented to the Conference of European Statisticians' seminar on "Getting our message across: Strategic reflections on modernizing statistical communication", Session 1: "Strategic communications" for discussion.

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I. Background

1. Oxford Dictionaries declared "post-truth" as its international word of the year for 2016 after use of the word increased by 2 000 per cent in 2015. Oxford Dictionaries explained how post-truth can be used about phenomena where "objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief".

2. The post-truth society can be considered a threat to enlightened public debate and people's ability to make informed choices based on research and facts. However, producers of official statistics should instead see it as an opportunity to develop new ways of thinking about communication and the dissemination of statistics.

3. Baldacci (2017) asserts that a communication strategy is not complete without adequate measuring instruments, but the challenge is that traditional key performance indicators (KPIs), such as visitor numbers to the websites of national statistics institutions (NSIs), user surveys of user needs and level of satisfaction, media reach, Facebook reach etc., will in all likelihood become less relevant in the coming years.

4. Google increasingly offers users the statistics and facts they are searching for directly rather than just providing a link to an NSI website. Dissemination services based on NSI open data solutions will be used to a growing extent in channels other than the NSI websites. Traditional media are in decline, and blogs, social media, YouTube and podcasts are becoming more popular platforms for people to get their news.

5. Modern communication strategies need to cultivate flexible technological solutions and flexible organizations with competent and flexible employees that will enable us to react and adapt to an ever-changing environment. Yet in addition, we should look for ways to be more pro-active. We need to be aware of which technological tools we and our users have at our disposal, which channels we should use, and which marketing and communication strategies we should employ vis-à-vis new and prospective user groups.

6. A stronger presence in schools and higher education institutions will also give NSIs greater insight into the needs and behaviour of future users. This will ideally position us to make more pro-active choices about how to disseminate official statistics to future generations rather than just continuing to react to present technological changes and the needs and expectations of the millennial generation.

II. Technological development

7. We cannot say for sure what technologies will exist a few years from now. Big data is becoming an important part of the source material in statistics production, chatbots may soon be a standard part of the user dialogue and statistics production and dissemination will be more automated. Technological developments will free up time and resources that we currently use in various manual tasks in our communication work. This will impact on how we search for and hire new employees. Our need for technologists, data journalists, brand builders and social media experts is growing more than for traditional tasks in connection with the day-to-day publishing of texts and content on Statistics Norway's website.

8. However, we will increasingly be at the mercy of algorithms, software providers, profit optimisation; all of which could potentially be at odds with the goals of NSIs and the needs of society. What we can plan for is our capacity to react and adapt to an ever-increasing pace of change. Nonetheless, there is a great need in this era of post truth for high-quality statistics and to inform the public about the important role of NSIs and official statistics in society.

9. The public sector is being digitised and public services are becoming more adapted to the individual. It is difficult to know how this development will affect the dissemination of official statistics, but the demand and development in the direction of more seamless public services will serve as a guide for the communication strategies in statistical agencies.

III. Millennials and post-millennials

10. 'Millennials (also known as Generation Y) are the generational demographic cohort following Generation X. There are no precise dates for when this cohort starts or ends; demographers and researchers typically use the early 1980s as starting birth years and the mid-1990s to early 2000s as ending birth years.' (Wikipedia, 2018). Post-millennials are a group that has not yet been given a common name, but Statistics Canada describes them as the first generation born after the internet became a natural part of our lives (Statistics Canada 2015). Post-millennials have, to an even greater extent than millennials, grown up in a time when technology has shaped lives and views on society and the world. A communication strategy that aims to reach this group of users cannot set long-term goals for just one or two communication channels. We must continue to create good, quality-assured content, but must be flexible in terms of which channels and platforms we use to communicate.

IV. New channels

11. NSI websites and traditional media may or may not be the primary channels for the dissemination of statistics in a few years. Nevertheless, we should not overlook traditional media. It is, and will continue to be, a path to credibility. In order to meet the demands of millennials, we will become increasingly adept at disseminating statistics via Facebook or other social media channels, creating our own YouTube channels and podcasts, providing our data in all the relevant formats, and using artificial intelligence-based software to respond to queries etc.

12. However, the question is whether we reach new generations through traditional media. The statistics on media use in Norway have shown a clear downward trend in the use of traditional news media and linear television by children and adolescents in recent years. News is consumed through social media, where it is easier to choose what to follow and what to disregard. NSIs will never be in the driving seat when it comes to adopting new communications technology; the media will always be one step ahead. We should first and foremost create content that is easy to share, disperse and link to other sites, such as videos, infographics, graphs and quotes from our statisticians.

V. Official statistics as a brand

13. Statistical agencies must think of "official statistics" and the agency's name as a brand. In the autumn of 2017, employees from Destatis, the Federal Statistical Office of Germany, wrote an insightful article presenting good arguments for statistical agencies adopting marketing tools as a means of ensuring that official statistics are recognised as a reliable source of information and building the agency as a brand (von Oppeln-Bronikowski, 2017).

14. A government-funded statistical agency is never going to have the same resources for marketing and branding as a commercial operator. We therefore need to find alternatives to commercial marketing. The basis for building our brand will always be to

produce good statistics, show that we are reliable, independent and objective. We then have to identify channels where we can reach existing and, not least, potential users.

15. We need to create "products" that are in demand by our target groups. We also need to catch potential users early so that the benefit of using official statistics as a tool and factual basis in discussions, education and life choices is understood from a young age. One of the goals of the communication strategy should be to reach as many potential users as possible while they are still at school.

We need to get them young

16. In this era of post-truth, the opportunity to select and evaluate the sources we use in the private domain, work and education is more important than ever. We must also question the sources used by users, be it an "influencer" in social media, a reputable journalist or the authorities.

17. The statistical agencies' contribution can be to improve "statistical literacy", familiarise pupils with the role of NSIs and the value of official statistics in society, and make official statistics a preferred source of factual information for them as they grow up and enter the workforce. We need to make them aware of the importance of contributing to the production of statistics when asked to partake in a survey (at least until all official statistics are based on big data).

18. The European Statistical System (ESS) project for Digital communication, User analytics and Innovative products (DIGICOM) has identified statistical agencies' common challenge by asking the question "How do we reach the new generation?". One of the sub-projects in DIGICOM focuses on reaching young people and creating targeted statistics, where the products are designed with the user group in mind. Statistics are a tool for understanding society, which everyone should have access to. They enable us to check claims, support our own arguments and debunk myths. Statistical agencies should ensure that their statistics are understandable to lay persons and inexperienced users.

19. In Norway, we know that a large share of the population has limited knowledge on statistics and mathematics, and this should be borne in mind when writing and disseminating statistics. The national statistical agency in Sweden, Statistics Sweden, has had great success with the service "Sweden in figures". The goal is to disseminate statistics and analyses in a way that is easy to understand. All text and other communication are adapted to the language comprehension and level of knowledge of a 15-year-old school pupil.

20. Statistics Norway will also make schools a target group for a simpler and adapted dissemination of statistics and analyses. Children and young people are the decision makers of tomorrow and potential suppliers of data for Statistics Norway's statistics. As such, we want to reach out to them and provide a solid basis to make decisions in their own lives. More accessible statistics will not only be of value to schoolchildren; we believe there is the potential to reach much broader user groups. However, we will initially focus on the defined target group of pupils and teachers.

21. A number of countries have school initiatives and different strategies aimed at reaching younger target groups. This work should be a strategic area in all NSIs' communication strategies. We recognise that many statistical agencies carry out work in this area, but it is often driven by enthusiasts and as a side-line to the main strategies. The dissemination work aimed at the emerging generation should be one of the pillars of the communication strategy, as it enables us to familiarise potential users with official statistics at an early age and to create better content that can also meet the needs of the generation

above. Content that is adapted to the level of an upper secondary school pupil is also highly likely to be suitable for users with no expertise in the relevant field.

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Measuring what matters - broadening official statistics:
Session 2: How to react swiftly

Dare to change in a changing society

Note by Statistics Netherlands

Summary

In 2015, Statistics Netherlands (CBS) embarked on a course of increased interaction with society to stay relevant and maximise the reach and impact of its work. First, CBS introduced a new way of disseminating output to improve its visibility and enhance fact-based decision making. Second, strong emphasis was put on innovation with a sound strategy and the introduction in 2016 of the CBS Centre for Big Data Statistics. The Center experiments with the use of new, private data which has led to a large number of innovative official statistics. This process is supported by research addressing the validation, data quality and methodological challenges in moving from an experimental product to official statistics. Third, since many policy tasks have shifted from national government institutions to municipalities, CBS has set up Urban Data Centres helping local and regional authorities to address these new information needs. Fourth, CBS has become a knowledge institute that contributes to the training of a future workforce of data scientists.

Providing relevant information to society requires multi-organisational collaboration and a more entrepreneurial approach. Accordingly, there arises a need for changes in the way information is generated, how products are funded and new business models generated, and how results are presented and distributed. This paper addresses several choices CBS has made on these topics and shares experiences and lessons learned. The document is presented to the Conference of European Statisticians' seminar on "Measuring what matters – broadening official statistics", Session 2 "How to react swiftly" for discussion.

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I. Introduction: the challenges of Statistics Netherlands

1. At Statistics Netherlands (CBS), we serve to inform policy and decision makers as well as researchers, entrepreneurs and the general public on societal relevant phenomena. To stand out from other information providers, we use a multiple indicator approach to generate coherent and complete insights. By law, it is our task to provide statistics, but also to promote the use of statistics at all levels of government. CBS has a long tradition in collecting and processing a huge variety of data sets and in data integration in order to compile and publish independent, high-quality statistics while observing privacy and security aspects.

2. Society itself is now changing rapidly, leading to drastic changes in both availability of data and information needs. Many human interactions generate data and a growing number of devices and sensors produce huge amounts of data. There are technical possibilities and a societal desire to process, combine and use these data leading to innumerable applications. Policy makers have a strong ambition to underpin new policy measures with timely and relevant data. On the other hand, tension in society between the potential benefits of data usage versus preserving individual privacy seems to be growing.

3. We also see that, in the Netherlands, more and more policy tasks are being delegated to municipalities, leading to new and specific needs for information by a growing number of policy makers. At regional level as well, a faster life cycle of policy measures is used. All this leads to increased demand for high quality, detailed, timely and transparent information, to be used not only by policy makers, but also by researchers and the public in general.

4. Moreover, statistical institutes are facing a decreasing willingness to participate in surveys, suffer from budget cuts and are challenged by companies claiming to deliver the information needed for policy making. Finally, the administrative data we have access to by law does not always contain the level of detail or timeliness that is needed. It is a safe conclusion that these developments have and will have a major impact on the way we collect, analyse and disseminate our statistical products and possibly even on our role in society.

II. How to deal with them? Our strategy

5. More indicators and hence more data are needed to describe societal phenomena to their full extent. We experience a data gap that needs to be addressed before we are able to fully support evidence-based policy making. Since 2015, CBS has set a different course in order to stay relevant and maximise the impact of its work. From innovating in an incremental way, we changed to implementing a number of 'disruptive' changes. We see that providing relevant information to society requires more and more multi-organisational collaboration, data access, strong leadership and a more entrepreneurial approach.

- In our newsroom, a new way of disseminating output was implemented to improve our visibility and to enhance fact-based decision making by producing statistics that focus on societal phenomena.
- To address the growing demand for information among municipalities, we made ourselves relevant at lower regional levels in so-called Urban Data Centres.
- Extreme focus was put on three innovation programmes. With these programmes, Statistics Netherlands has the ambition to become a Centre of Excellence. This has resulted in the introduction of a CBS Centre for Big Data Statistics in 2016. At the CBDS, together with our partners, we use new data sources and produce new, fast

and detailed indicators leading to innovative, experimental products. Innovation is partly financed with commissioned work and a focus on grant applications. For that, we started a grant development office.

- The other two innovation programmes are being launched this year. To fill the aforementioned data gap, the programme Advanced Data Collection serves to obtain access to all sources relevant for our purposes, mostly data owned by the private sector. New indicators can be developed, lessening our dependence on surveys and thus largely reducing the administrative burden on society. In our programme Information Dialogue, we aim to improve the accessibility of our statistical information, with as the ultimate goal a natural language speech-controlled interface providing real-time information (a statistical "SIRI").
- CBS has become a knowledge institute that contributes to training a future workforce of data scientists throughout the Dutch government. In September 2018, CBS will organise a government- wide data traineeship in collaboration with the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations where newly recruited data scientists receive a one-year training at CBS before taking up work at the organisation that recruited them.

III. A deeper dive

6. In response to the above developments, we see changes in the way information is generated, products are funded, new business models are generated and how results are presented and distributed. Below, you will find a brief description of the CBS newsroom, the Urban Data Centres and the CBS Centre for Big Data Statistics.

A. The CBS dissemination process: our newsroom

7. At CBS, not only do we want to produce statistics, but we also want to make sure that they can be used by society. Therefore, actual questions within society must be answered in a way users can understand. Mere figures, data and isolated indicators are in many cases insufficient to provide the complete answer people want. The public needs descriptions of complex phenomena behind the statistics.

8. We have organised our dissemination process like at news media companies, with a central news desk, editorial staff and editors. We have also created two main dissemination channels: one direct and one indirect. The direct channel are our 'owned media', such as our own open data platform and interface Statline, our website, our social media accounts and printed matter. The indirect channel are the 'earned media': Dutch news organisations including both printed and broadcast media, who bring our most recent statistics and stories to the public on a daily basis. In our newsroom, we have a state-of-the-art radio and TV studio with live audiovisual uplink to the Dutch TV industry. This studio is also used for live broadcasts by our trained spokespersons. Staff is trained to produce content as they like and to maintain relationships with journalists in direct cooperation with news organisations. Online content is managed and Twitter feeds are kept up to date.

9. We deliver a large (non-delicate) part of our publications to the media up to 24 hours before scheduled release time, so they can prepare in-depth reports. We also set most of our publication times at midnight (start of the day) so all media can begin publishing the news simultaneously in the early morning, thus reaching the greatest impact.

B. Urban Data Centres

10. One of the biggest risks of having each municipality serve/fulfil its own information requirements is that it encourages a wide variety of definitions, approaches, methodologies and visualisations. We anticipated a situation in which individual cities or municipalities are unable to compare indicators and information cannot be aggregated at national level. Since reversing such a situation would be extremely difficult, CBS launched the Urban Data Centre concept. Under this concept, a regional representation of CBS is established locally at the municipal headquarters. Local policymakers and CBS employees work together at this Urban Data Centre to address that city's specific information needs. Since most data required by cities is already available or can be made available at low cost by CBS, local authorities save money while achieving better results while CBS will cover the costs of these Data Centres. Results and methods used are shared within the community of Urban Data Centres. Also in 2016, we partnered with the World Council on City Data (WCCD), where an ISO standard is being implemented for the certification of individual cities based on specific indicators. At the moment, 11 different Data Centres are already in place across the Netherlands: 8 Urban Data Centres, a Rural Data Centre (formed by a number of smaller municipalities), a Data Centre at Provincial level in the Province of Limburg, a Departmental Data Centre at the Ministry of Economic Affairs and an Academic Data Centre at the University of Groningen. CBS also helps cities with information insights for their most important policy questions and advises how resources can be allocated.

C. CBS Centre for Big Data Statistics

11. The mission of the Centre for Big Data Statistics (CBDS) is to implement big data sources in official statistics.[1] We are in a unique position because of our ability to integrate these big data sources into the wealth of survey and administrative data which CBS - and only CBS - already has available. This position turns us into the government datahub of the Netherlands. At the same time, we are taking our responsibility for all issues of privacy and security related to big data. The mission statement of the CBS Centre for Big Data Statistics reads:

The CBDS explores and exploits new data sources, applying state-of-the-art methodology in collaboration with partners, in order to provide timely, comprehensive information on social phenomena relevant to users.

12. At the CBDS, we improve the timeliness of statistics, create new statistics and improve on existing statistics (e.g. higher spatial resolution, higher frequency or additional breakdowns) while lowering the administrative burden on society.

13. Results are published frequently on www.cbs.nl/innovation, where we also solicit active feedback from the public. These beta products are not official statistics but they do go beyond experiments. They are proofs of concepts in which new sources are investigated for their quality and we demonstrate their applicability to specific social issues. In addition, new visualisations are developed and new insights are presented. The beta products are transferred to internal production by other CBS departments, provided the quality is sufficient and there is permanent demand. Focus topics include energy transition, air

[1] We do not use a formal definition for big data in this context. This is a moving target and quite a variety of definitions exists. Basically, we mean generated data that are not collected for statistical purposes in the first place (like surveys and censuses), but for another purpose. Examples are sensor data, transaction data, social media and website data, administrative data, internet of things, …, and more

quality, mobility and health. We also work on economic indicators, housing market, safety, labour market, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and smart cities. Furthermore, CBDS directs efforts towards conditional and methodological issues. New methods such as machine learning, text mining or AI need to be developed that can help extract relevant statistical information from generated data sources. New methods are also needed for the integration of heterogeneous and sometimes volatile data sources, since the value of the CBDS lies particularly in this combination. Other topics we are looking at include data access, data integrity, ethics and privacy.

14. At the CBDS, we actively work together with over 40 partners, both in the Netherlands and abroad: universities and research organisations, NSIs and government institutions and the private sector. Within these partnerships, new insights and products can be realised in new business models; we can share this knowledge, data and infrastructure to create value and improve the strength of both organisations. Because more data will be shared between organisations, much attention is being paid to developing privacy-preserved data sharing (PPDS) techniques and the ethical and legal framework that must accompany this. We also believe that awareness must increase among Dutch citizens on the possible societal benefits and how their privacy is being safeguarded.

IV. Concluding remarks and lessons learned

15. In order to stay societally relevant in the future, we need genuine and rapid change. Traditional methods and practices are losing ground and new ones are needed. Over the past few years, we have learned several valuable lessons in acting on these lines. As our concluding remarks, we would like to share some of these lessons, in random order:

- Join forces. Ecosystems and (temporal) coalitions and consortia are the future. Due to budget cuts, the fast pace of technological changes and growing accessibility of data sources, co-creation is needed and no single organisation will be able to act merely on its own. Conceiving such collaborations is not always easy. It calls for a tailor-made approach in which the common goals of both organisations should be addressed. This is especially true for consortia with companies, where business cases are often the main driver.

- Dialogue. A lot of effort needs to be put into fostering dialogue with policy makers. At CBS, we do not always know exactly which questions they have, and in turn policy makers are not always aware of all the possibilities CBS innovations could offer. Filling these gaps requires close cooperation. At the same time, a dialogue is needed within CBS, since change rarely comes without resistance.

- Need for data. Access to data remains a difficult issue. Last year, we have gained access to (private) data on housing market, navigation systems, mobile phone data, datasets on the energy transition and audience ratings. We also used open data including social media content, sources on cybersecurity and earth observation data. To fulfil our ambitions, we need access to more sources. New legislation is underway for this at the national level and we are participating in new EU legislation as well.

- Focus. We did this by setting up new departments which are detached from the existing organisation chart. Next to that, the CBDS acts like an entrepreneurial startup within an organisation, and has the freedom to explore the roles, agile processes and IT that are needed for its success. The CBDS is connected with the rest of CBS and with third parties via flexible, multi-disciplinary project teams.

- Manage expectations. Understanding the context of the source, exploring, cleaning and learning its applicability are difficult and time-consuming tasks. We need to explain to our environment that these steps take time and that retrieving transparent, objective insights out of generated data sources is not trivial.
- Act. We have shifted from thinking whether something is possible to how it can be made possible. This goes for facing the data deluge, developing relevant methodology, occupying a position at lower regional level and increasing our presence in society.
- Commitment. To start acting, strong commitment from the top management is a requisite. Next to that, we at CBDS have learned that commitment from business owners to our content is needed as early in the process as possible.
- Self-confidence. As a statistical agency with access to a wealth of administrative data and clear ambitions, we are an attractive organisation to collaborate with. Shortly after introducing the Urban Data Centres and the CBDS, we stopped looking for new partners, because they came looking for us. This has boosted our confidence.
- Big goals, small steps. In experimental projects in general and in gaining experience in partnerships with third parties, small steps are best. Fail cheap and fail fast, build on successes. Partnerships will only be kicked off if a tangible (small) project can be identified. Mere intentions do not lead to results.

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